

The faulty feedback in British politics – Part One

‘Not in my name’

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The current state of British politics and the dangers to our own democratic system

In the first of two articles which we publish below, author and analyst Derrick Berthelsen identifies a fundamental flaw in our parliamentary democracy which could destroy it entirely unless drastic action is taken by those in charge.

A gulf has emerged over several decades now between those we send to Parliament and the voters they are supposed to serve. Increasingly drawn from the metropolitan and university-educated classes many of them are at variance not only with the lived-experiences of their electors but their views and values as well.

So certain have they become of their own world view – reinforced by those around them – that they “soon stop listening to the feedback mechanism. They become so entrenched that they start ignoring all feedback that does not come from or chime with one very small segment of society – a segment of society to which they belong, and which broadly share the same beliefs and values as they do.”

If voters no longer believe in the system because those they send to parliament no longer listen to them, what outlet will they have?

The article is reproduced in full below with a link to the original beneath it.

Homeostasis and the death of politics

Written by Derrick Berthelsen

Homeostasis according to Britannica, is “any self-regulating process by which biological systems tend to maintain stability whilst adjusting to conditions that are optimal for survival”.

Whilst stability appears to be a steady state, in reality it is anything but: “the stability attained is actually a dynamic equilibrium, in which continuous change occurs yet relatively uniform conditions prevail.”

How does the system know what and where to change, in order to reach and maintain homeostasis? “Any system in dynamic equilibrium tends to reach a steady state, a balance that resists outside forces of change. When such a system is disturbed, built-in regulatory devices respond to the departures to establish a new balance; such a process is one of feedback control.”

Now consider society as a living organism undergoing constant change. Like a living organism, it is constantly trying to achieve homeostasis. Like a living organism, it also requires regulatory device(s) to manage change. For society, it is politics and the political system that represents the built in regulatory device(s) trying to establish a new balance. Again, like in living organisms, the regulatory device (political system) relies on feedback control to know what, where and how to enact change in order to maintain balance.

To paraphrase Sir Winston Churchill, the reason why “democracy

is the worst form of Government except for all those others” is because of that feedback mechanism.

In other political systems, be they monarchies, technocracies, or various flavours of authoritarianism and totalitarianism, the feedback mechanism either doesn't exist or is fundamentally flawed. Usually, this is because the feedback is limited to a very small segment of society – and a segment which broadly and increasingly shares the same beliefs and values.

The longer this elite maintains power, the more separated and isolated from the rest of society they become. The less useful the feedback mechanism becomes, and as a result the system moves further and further away from homeostasis.

As Britannica states, “If homeostasis is successful, life continues; if unsuccessful, disaster or death ensues.” Think of it like a pressure cooker with the vents blocked. As the pressure builds and there is no way to release the pressure, the system explodes.

This is why all non-democratic political systems eventually fail. Society moves further and further away from homeostasis, the pressure builds, and eventually the system collapses. “Disaster or death ensues.”

It is not just non-democratic political systems that fail, though. There are plenty of examples of democratic political systems that fail to maintain homeostasis. Why is that?

Mainstream MPs increasingly herald from just one segment of society

It is my contention that this is because even in democratic political systems, it is possible for political elites to become separated from the rest of the population. They stop listening to the feedback mechanism. They become so entrenched

that they start ignoring all feedback that does not come from or chime with one very small segment of society – a segment of society to which they belong, and which broadly share the same beliefs and values as they do.

They then run “the system” to the benefit of just that one small segment.

How can that happen in democracies, where elections should ensure that different parties with different policies and representing different segments of society compete for votes?

It can happen when all the mainstream parties become controlled by just one segment of society. All their political candidates are drawn from just that one segment of society. They share the same values. All their policies, however much presented differently, amount to essentially the same.

That is what I believe has happened today, not just in the UK but throughout the West.

Much has been written about the rise of a new elite throughout the West, who they are, what they believe, why and how they have risen, and the influence and control they exert in societies (from Christopher Lasch’s *The Revolt of the Elites* to Matthew Goodwin’s *Values, Voice and Virtue*). For the purpose of this article, I want to concentrate just on their dominance of our political parties.

Sociologists and political scientists define this segment of society thus: they are generally university educated, employed in the professional or creative classes, live in cities or University towns, are relatively wealthy, and share liberal cosmopolitan values. They tend to mix in the same social circles, marry within those social circles, dislike or even despise traditional values like national pride and borders, and they are happy to live and work in any similar place in the world (which is why David Goodhart refers to them as “anywheres”).

They represent about 20 per cent of the UK population (the most radical being about 10–15 per cent) and increasingly define themselves by their opposition to the parts of society they are not part of – those which do believe in the nation state, national borders, traditional values. These other segments feel a deep sense of belonging to where they are from and live.

Look at the mainstream parties' MPs to see if there is any evidence that they increasingly herald from just one segment of society. Professor of Politics Oliver Heath, in his paper "Policy Alienation, Social Alienation and Working-Class Abstention in Britain, 1964 – 2010", offers this evidence:

The number of MPs with a background in manual work has fallen dramatically. In 1964 over 37 per cent of Labour MPs came from manual occupational backgrounds. By 2010 this fell to just under 10 per cent ...

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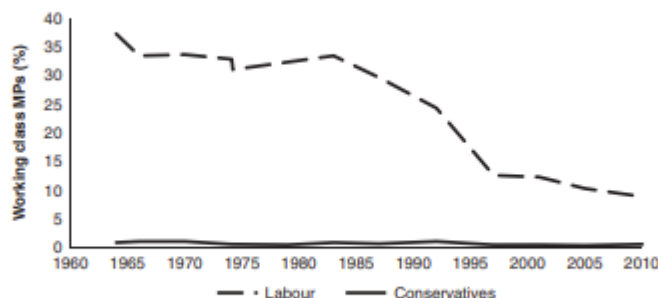
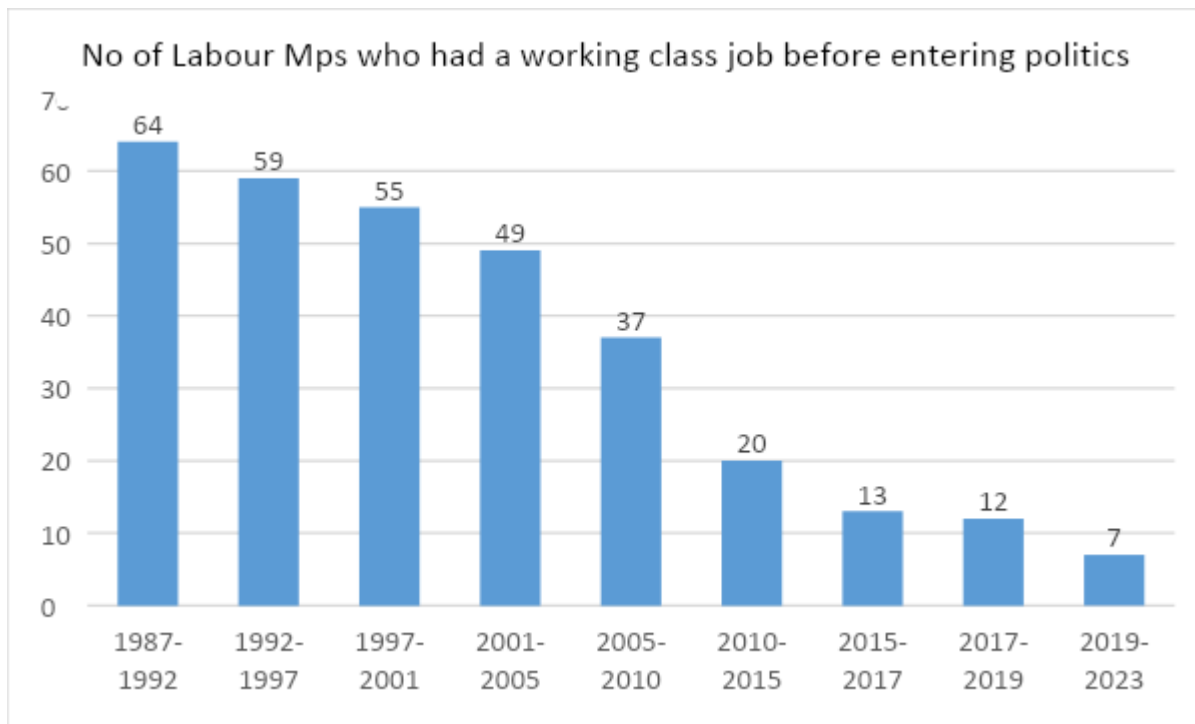
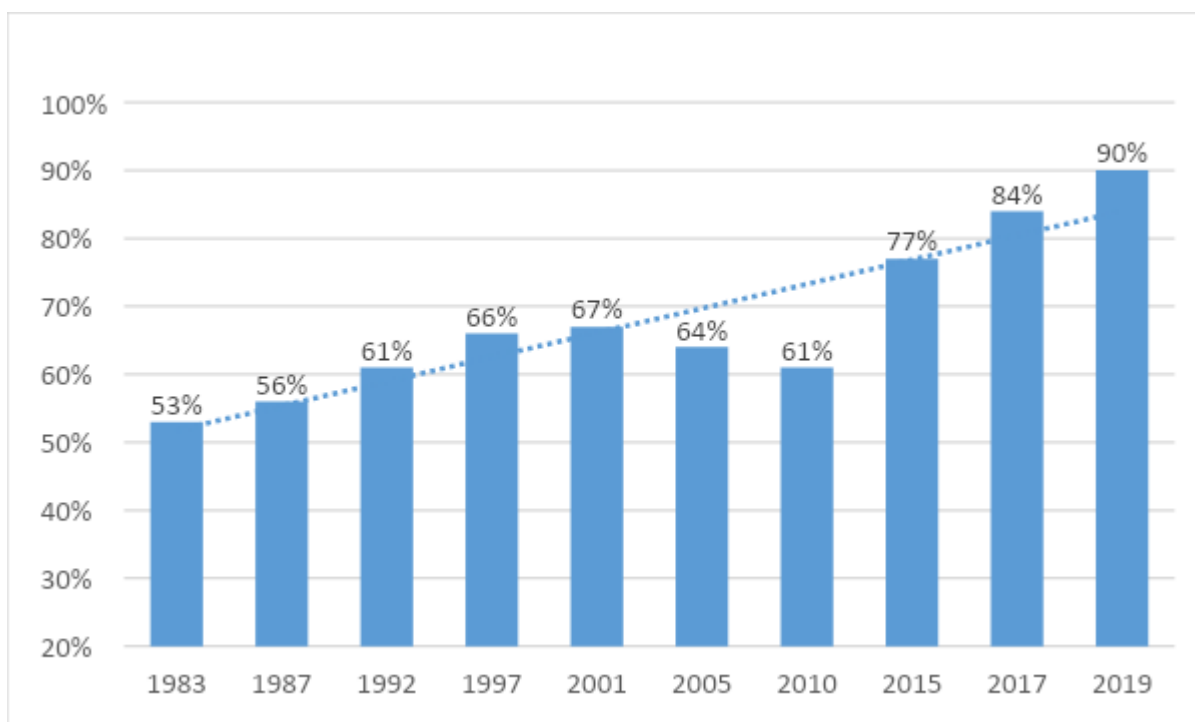


Fig. 4. Working-class MPs in Britain, 1964–2010
Source: Datacube

Since then, the figure has fallen further. According to Parliament, today only three per cent of MPs in the House of Commons have any experience of blue-collar work. In numerical terms, the number of MPs who had working class jobs before entering politics can today be counted on two hands, whilst conversely nearly one in five MPs have only ever worked in politics straight from University.



Since the 1970s, when a majority of Labour MP's were non-university educated, the per centage who now have been to university has risen inexorably to over 90 per cent. Indeed as a per centage, more Labour MPs (and Lib Dems) have been to university than Tory MPs.



What about the question of values and beliefs? In 2020, UK In A Changing Europe did a study exploring voters' economic and

social values, alongside their choices in the EU referendum and 2019 general election. It compared the results to the values and beliefs of MPs. The conclusion was:

On social values, Labour and Conservative MPs are more socially liberal than their voters. Conservative MPs are significantly more socially liberal than the average voter, with Labour even further away.

As Professor David Runciman explained it in his piece “The key flaw in our democracy: MPs don’t represent the people”:

This points to the need for a more profound reform of how parliament represents the people. The problem goes deeper than partisan divides: neither of the main parties is able to bridge wider social divisions because both parties are relatively uniform in their make-up.

What does that mean for the policies they implement? On the big issues, it is clear that their policies are broadly the same. Be it outsourcing decision making to non-elected national or international institutions, mass immigration, racing to net zero, globalisation, tax rates, attitudes towards the criminal justice system, or implementation of “woke” ideology, the differences in policy are more presentational than fundamental.

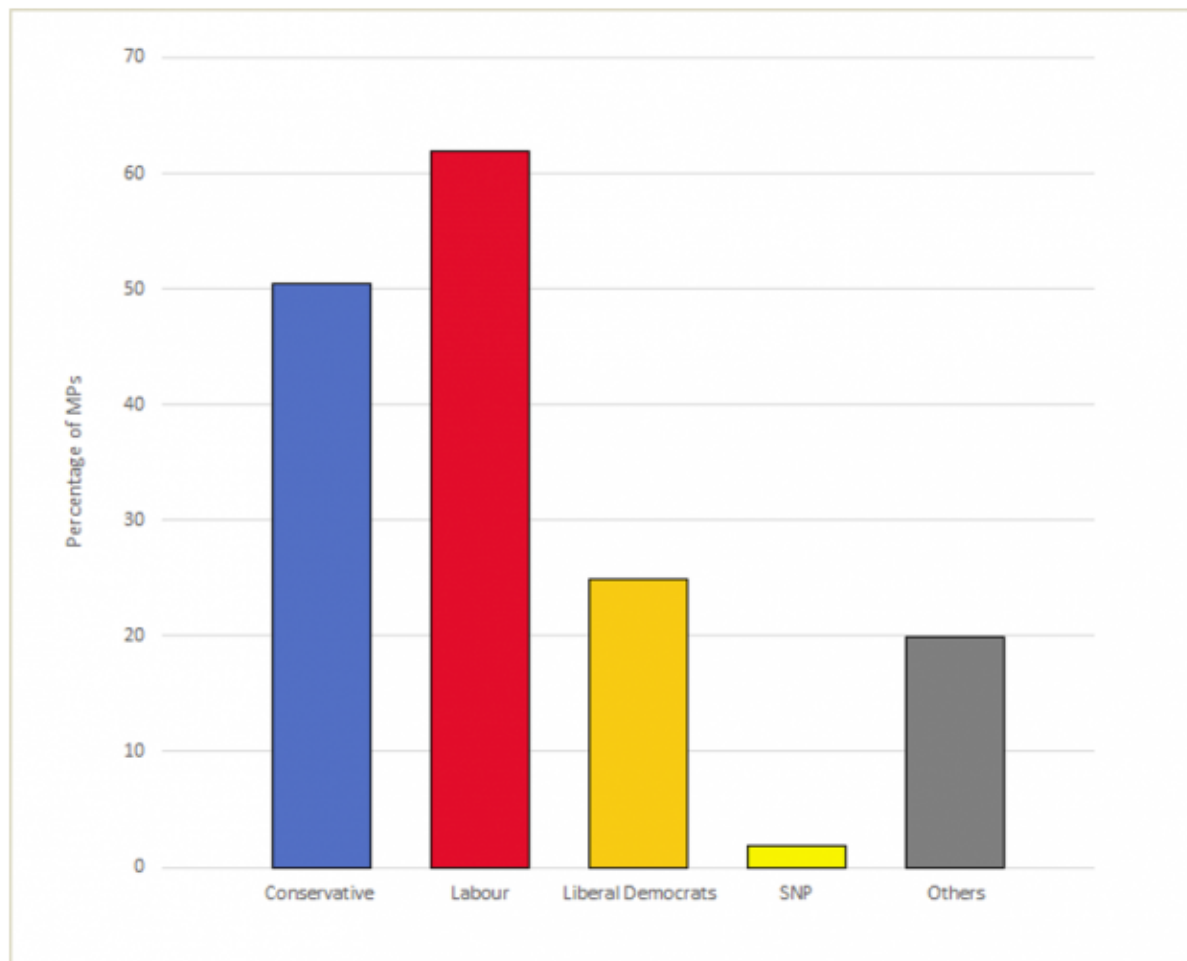
It is clear that this elite is increasingly at odds with the wishes of the electorate. To quote Matthew Goodwin:

Remarkably we now live in a country where more than half of people think “none of the main parties represent my priorities and values”, more than six in ten think “Britain is broken” and nearly seven in ten think “the experts in this country do not understand people like me”.

A great example of this failure in the feedback mechanism is the UK vote to leave the European Union. As the result was announced, we witnessed the establishment’s absolute shock and

horror – but more than that, their complete disbelief. In his 2020 piece “BREXIT: HOW MPS STRUGGLED TO REFLECT THEIR VOTERS”, Chris Stafford noted that whilst 52 per cent of voters (and 67 per cent of constituencies) voted to leave the EU, just 25 per cent of MPs claimed to do the same.

Figure 1: MPs who were ‘out of step’ at the 2016 Referendum with their constituents



The real evidence of a failure in the feedback mechanism was the response. In a functioning system, one which was attempting to achieve homeostasis, MPs would have both attempted to understand the reasons for the vote and moved towards the electorate’s position(s). Instead, they first chose to blame anybody and everybody for rigging the vote – from the Russians, social media misinformation and cabals of financiers – before spending the next three years trying to overturn it.

Time and time again, rather than listen to the feedback mechanism, the establishment has chosen not just to ignore it but to actively defy it. The electorate will simply not be allowed to have the change it desires and keep voting for.

With the appointment of Sunak and Starmer, voters will only be allowed to choose at the next election between parties controlled by people from the same small segment of society, who share the same values and beliefs, and whose policies (despite some presentational differences) are fundamentally the same.

The system will not be allowed to achieve homeostasis. As the Britannica states, "If homeostasis is unsuccessful, disaster or death ensues."

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About the author: Derrick Berthelsen is an author and analyst who has worked for a number of Investment Banks and Investment Managers and currently runs his own research, business and strategic consultancy firm.

The original article can be found [here](#).

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